



European Federation for Transport and Environment

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A T&E briefing on the CAEP/6 aviation meeting in Montreal

Yet another wasted opportunity to tackle emissions from aviation?

About 200 government representatives and delegates from observer organisations met from 2 to 12 February 2004 in Montreal for the Sixth Meeting of the Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection¹ (CAEP/6).

The meeting focussed principally on new standards for aircraft NO_x emissions for the landing and take-off cycle. Noise protection and market-based options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were also discussed, although there were no concrete outcomes in terms of action.

T&E has been monitoring the CAEP talks as part of the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (ICSA), which includes environmental organisations from Europe and the United States.

Aircraft emissions

The exponential growth in air traffic has overtaken any efficiency gains achieved by new aircraft, so existing air quality legislation remains a factor that could limit the expansion of airport capacity. CAEP's own analysis predicts that global nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions from aircraft will be 169% above 2002 levels in 2020 if airport growth continues unchecked – a rise from 230,000 to 699,000 tonnes. Reaching a consensus on a new NO_x standard was the most crucial objective of CAEP/6, but despite a long debate the agreed stringency standard was disappointingly low. All new aircraft from 2008 will have to achieve just a 12% reduction in NO_x emissions compared to the existing standard, even though the analysis and discussion considered options as high as –30%.

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¹ CAEP is the environmental committee of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Over the last two decades, CAEP has been able to create, and periodically review, minimum standards for cleaner and quieter aircraft. However, fostering aviation growth is the overall goal of this United Nations body. The triennial CAEP meeting concludes the work in different sub-groups and proposes recommendations to the next ICAO Assembly. Assembly resolutions form the cornerstones for internationally harmonised aviation standards. Too often, the consensus among CAEP members reflects more the interests of the aviation industry than ecological and health concerns.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Currently CAEP is focusing its climate emissions work only on CO₂. Three policy options have been considered with a focus on reducing CO₂ emissions: emission charges, emission trading and voluntary measures. A CAEP/6 study on emission trading proposed voluntary trading systems or their integration into existing national or regional trading schemes. Developing countries are strictly opposed to the introduction of mandatory charges for their aircraft emissions. The United States also tried to oppose any policy initiative beyond voluntary commitments. However, Europe continues to argue that further action on creating a national or regional charging scheme is possible, but the success of any trading or charging scheme in terms of coverage will depend on establishing a successful scheme for allocating greenhouse gas emissions from international aviation. While CAEP will continue its work on technical questions raised by allocation, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will play a stronger role in the future and will hopefully resolve the political questions surrounding allocation, by 2005.

Noise

The discussions on aviation noise included re-certification of aircraft engines, population encroachment around airports, and noise modelling.

What should we do now to tackle aviation emissions?

At the end of CAEP/6, the ICSA delegation was not alone in being unhappy with the slow progress. Already last October, EU environment commissioner Margot Wallström complained about the disappointingly slow progress in ICAO, and the outcome of CAEP/6 is clear evidence that her concerns are justified. T&E is now looking for Europe to take the lead in developing a viable system to rein in the growing emissions of greenhouse gases from aviation to protect European citizens, as well as regional action to tackle air pollution and aircraft noise.

The outcome of the CAEP/6 meeting will result in recommendations to the ICAO Assembly, which will be held in autumn 2004. The CAEP/7 process will continue its work, based on the Assembly's decisions.

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